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## THE EDITOR'S DIARY,

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### The Political Situation.

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT shows no sign of weakening in his determination to effect the nomination of Secretary Taft as his successor, and the worthy Secretary himself is prosecuting the quest with characteristic assiduity. How much actual progress he has made is not apparent, because of the autocratic authority held by political bosses in so many States. His triumph over Senator Foraker in Ohio seems to be definite and conclusive, but this was to have been expected from the day when Boss Cox rallied to his standard. That he could have made an excellent showing against Governor Hughes in New York, moreover, there can be no doubt, had he not considered it the part of wisdom to avert a serious party disruption. So, too, in Indiana, Illinois and Pennsylvania, President Roosevelt's popularity and the great influence of the Federal officeholders could easily have been utilized to divide the delegations with the "favorite sons." But it is not in Mr. Taft's nature, and apparently not within the scope of the President's policy, to create antagonisms which might prove to have been both hurtful and unnecessary. So the candidate pursues the even tenor of his way, guardedly upholding the administration on all occasions, and winning distinct favor on his own account whenever he comes into personal contact with the people. But for the stealthy and resolute opposition of powerful conservative Republicans, his nomination and, in our judgment, his election would be assured.

That opposition, however, must be reckoned with. It is much stronger and far more bitter than is generally supposed, and finds its home in the hearts of men accustomed to dominate, without whose active aid no Republican has ever been elected President. The reasons for the frank antagonism of this powerful group are

well known. Those comprising it—capitalists, bankers, manufacturers and business men generally—would have welcomed the nomination of Mr. Taft two years ago; his judicial temperament and his record, especially with respect to labor-unions, were wholly to their liking; and his engaging personality would have been recognized as a most useful factor in maintaining the dominance of the Republican party without the need of making the enormous expenditures which in recent campaigns have been deemed essential to the accomplishment of that purpose.

Hostility was engendered primarily by the fact that he was the President's candidate, whose success could be regarded as second only to Mr. Roosevelt's own re-election as evidence of approval of a radical departure in executive administration which is considered to be pregnant with danger to stability in government. Even so, this apprehension might have been allayed had not Mr. Taft voluntarily or under pressure from his chief declared his personal adherence to nearly, if not quite, all of the so-called "policies" which have come to be regarded as highly objectionable. But two alternative conclusions could be reached by the conservatives: Either Mr. Taft had been really converted to the new ways by the persuasive President, or he was ready and willing to forswear his own convictions to gratify his personal ambition. In either case he could not be regarded as trustworthy or likely to prove a satisfactory Chief Magistrate, especially at a time when calmness and caution are believed to be the most requisite of qualifications.

There is no gainsaying the logic of this conclusion from the point of view indicated; but, to our mind, it is fatally defective in that it gives no heed to attendant circumstances and closely related conditions of vital importance. Whatever may have instigated the present popular trend towards radicalism, there can be no question that it exists in an aggravated form, and that in the eyes of the masses it has but two dependable exponents. This fact, indeed, is so well recognized by both President Roosevelt and Mr. Bryan that each takes particular care to avert possible loss of his own popularity by complimenting the other whenever opportunity offers. The two being the undoubted leaders of their respective parties, and there being practically no differences in policy between them, except in so far as "regulation" differs from "ownership" of railways, it is plain that a

wholly unprecedented situation has arisen in American politics; and that an attempt to resolve it by appealing to party sentiment or by purchasing votes, as in the past, would be hopelessly futile.

We do not take seriously the implied threats which emanate at intervals from the White House to the effect that the conservatives must accept the President's nominee or abide by his own renomination; we regard that as no more than a thoroughly characteristic and somewhat amusing play in the interesting game. Mr. Roosevelt proposes to have his own way in naming his successor or know the reason why, but he has no intention of becoming the candidate himself. It may be, although we cannot so believe, that he might not consider his voluntary pledge of restraint an insurmountable barrier to recognition of so great a popular demand, let us say, as would be evidenced by nominations by both political conventions; but the breaking of his given word under any less inopportune call is hardly conceivable.

Even though the people should show in some such manner virtual unanimity in insisting that the President continue the work of moral regeneration of whose beginning he is naturally proud, we are assured upon the highest authority that he would flatly refuse to comply with the demand. Contrary to an opinion which has become quite general, the President cherishes no illusions respecting his own character or temperament. He appreciates the irresistibility of his impulse to seize and exercise to the fullest extent the greatest measure of power attainable, and, being alive to the danger to the Republic of further absorption, he reluctantly, we may well believe, but firmly and patriotically, renounces an extension of authority which might lead to kingship or revolution. While all will not concur in the President's opinion that he would be re-elected by an overwhelming majority, there is no doubt of the sincerity of his own belief to that effect. His present attitude, therefore, must be regarded by friends and foes alike as highly commendable, and comparable in our history only with the act of George Washington in rejecting the proffer of a crown.

The Republican situation, then, is resolved to a choice between Secretary Taft and one of the more conservative candidates, and the question of availability immediately arises. The most pertinent query, Could any candidate except Mr. Taft poll the full "Roosevelt vote"? must be answered in the negative. That Mr.

Roosevelt personally would loyally support the candidacy of Speaker Cannon, Governor Hughes or even Mr. Fairbanks may be taken for granted, but the like could not be said with confidence of the multitude of followers. The fact that a nomination had been made in flat contravention of the President's strong desire would act as a deterrent even more effectively than the precisely similar feeling whose manifestation among Mr. Bryan's adherents resulted in the crushing defeat of Mr. Parker in 1904. There can be no reasonable doubt that Mr. Roosevelt's enthusiastic championship of his own candidate would hold his radical supporters for Mr. Taft; but it is by no means certain that the nomination of another would not open wide the door to Mr. Bryan to pose successfully as the President's real legatee, and draw from the Republican ranks hundreds of thousands of resentful radicals. To our mind, at any rate, in a time of hardship which will be greatly intensified before November such a result seems not only possible, but highly probable.

Moreover, the fact should not be overlooked that the nomination of an anti-Roosevelt candidate by the Republicans would leave to conservative Democrats little argument against Mr. Bryan at Denver. The present growing feeling of certainty that Mr. Bryan could not possibly win against Mr. Roosevelt or Mr. Taft is weakening his candidacy daily, and may yet encompass his defeat in the Democratic convention; but what answer likely to prove convincing to the delegates could be made to the query, Who can poll as many votes as Bryan against Fairbanks, Cannon or even Hughes? In the event of Mr. Taft's nomination with substantial unanimity, we should not be surprised to see Mr. Bryan voluntarily withdraw in the interest of the party to which he is so greatly indebted; but if he should be blessed with the privilege of opposing another, nothing could prevent his nomination by acclamation, and grave doubts respecting the ultimate result would exist till the ballots had been cast and counted. In any case, the period of unrest, uncertainty and business depression would surely continue.

In view of these considerations, and of certain positive arguments that may properly be advanced in favor of Mr. Taft,—such as his record on the bench, in the Philippines and in the cabinet, his undoubted personal fitness, his recognized intellectual, judicial and moral equipment, his tact, popularity and sweetness

and humor of disposition,—the present antagonistic attitude of the group of Republican conservatives to whom we have referred impresses us as short-sighted and unwise, if not, indeed, unpatriotic. Surely mere pique at the President for insisting upon naming his successor and a desire to humiliate him cannot be held to justify conduct almost certain to bring yet further distress to our harassed land. Nor is there any real ground for the suspicion that Mr. Taft as President would represent anybody but Mr. Taft himself and the whole American people. His guarded expressions of approval of Mr. Roosevelt's medley of "policies" are insignificant when contrasted with his firm declaration that, now that the President's moral crusade has been crowned with general adoption of better business methods, the time has come to refrain from enacting further coercive legislation, and to open wide again the door to American enterprise and progress.

For ourselves, we cannot but feel that these practical considerations greatly outweigh any proper feeling of resentment at the President's autocratic insistence, and that it is the part of wisdom for all good citizens to acquiesce in the nomination of Mr. Taft as not only excellent in itself, but likely to effect a suitable Democratic nomination as well, and thus permit the immediate restoration of confidence which has become so vitally essential to the well-being of the whole people.